



VOL. 2

BRACEBITS

AUG. 1987



NO. 8

EDITORIAL
by Hal Nason

Welcome to the first anniversary issue of BRACEBITS! Yes, this is the twelfth issue that we have published. The first four issues were dated last year, 1986 and three of them were bi-monthly issues. This is the eighth issue of 1987, so we have finally published a years worth of newsletters.

The point system, which was initiated last month, seems to be working well. There is a marked increase in activity and direct involvement with the functions of B.R.A.C.E. by our members. The point totals to date will be found elsewhere in this newsletter. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!

I'm going to devote the rest of this editorial to one of my FANTASIES. One that actually may be realized in the not too distant future. At first you may wonder what all my ramblings have to do with Atari Computers. Please bear with me and by the end of this editorial you will know.

The compact disc player has arrived in force. Recent reports from several sources confirm that the CD has had an even quicker acceptance by the American public than the VCR did a few years ago. Recently the sales dollars of CD's has surpassed that of LP's, putting the CD in second place behind cassette sales.

But, I have noticed, from reading several articles about Compact Disc technology, that the technology is misunderstood by the public and even those reporters who try to explain the CD to them. For instance, I have read that the CD stores data similar to the way a computer does. The CD does not store data in a similar manner. IT STORES DATA EXACTLY AS A COMPUTER DOES! The sound is stored on the CD as 0's and 1's just as all data processed by a computer is stored (and represented at all times). Most of us have 8-bit computers though, while the CD works on 16-bit processors.

In fact, a CD player is a computer, complete with a disk drive! The CD player is merely a computer which, at the present time, runs only one preset program, i.e. reading the data on the disk (the Compact Disc), placing the data into RAM, and translating that data into sound (music) by use of a digital to analog converter. Now wouldn't be fantastically wonderful if this computer could interact with my Atari?

Hopefully, in the near future it will. All I would need is the proper interface, since my CD player already has an output of the unconverted data. Yes, all I need is an interface (are you listening ICD, or anybody else?) and I could join the CD-ROM club. There is no reason I can think

of to limit CD-ROM technology to 16-bit computer systems. Think of how nice it would be to have a whole encyclopedia on one or two discs! CD-ROM also has the potential for interactive adventure games with graphics that would have been unheard of a few short years ago.

So there you have my fantasy. I sure hope I don't have to wait too much longer to realize it.

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Any dues paying member of B.R.A.C.E. may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month the newsletter is due out. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Articles may be mailed to Hal Nason, 258 E. High St. #9, Lexington, KY 40508 or submitted via modem to me at 606-255-5989. You will need to call me first in order to arrange a time for me to have my good ol' Atari set up for auto answer. AtariWriter is the preferable format, but any ASCII format will be acceptable.

B.R.A.C.E. meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 P.M. The site of the meeting each month will be room MN 263 in the University of Kentucky Medical Center. The public is welcome to attend our meetings, but access to the library and the newsletter are limited to dues paying members of B.R.A.C.E.

B.R.A.C.E. OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: PHIL TAYLOR
VICE PRESIDENT: HAL NASON
SECRETARY/TREASURER: NORMA WILLIAMS
LIBRARIAN: PAT DANRIDGE

NEWSLETTER

HAL NASON: EDITOR
PHILLIP TAYLOR: ASST. EDITOR
PAT DANRIDGE: EDITORIAL ASST.

B.R.A.C.E. Minutes
July 11, 1987

The meeting was opened by our President Phillip Taylor. He announced that a trip was scheduled for August 15th to go to Columbus, Ohio. All members that were interested were welcome to ride along also. B.R.A.C.E. will be paying for the gas to and from Columbus and members should bring enough money for their lunch.

It was also announced that we have delayed the purchasing of the Analog subscription. Since Antic has lowered their prices for their disk subscription, we are hoping that Analog will also drop their prices in the near future.

Pat Dandridge gave a library report announcing the newest additions to our software library. Afterwards, I gave a short treasury report on last months financial activities.

Our program this month was given by two of our local Atari Sysops, Geoff Bartenhagen, sysop of Rome 41 AD and Bobby Elliott, sysop of After Hours. SO YOU WANT TO BE A SYSOP was the main subject of this program. Geoff discussed how he started his bulletin board and how much time and money it took to operate his system. Bobby discussed some of the negative points on being a sysop. Some of these were users playing games instead of posting messages, the software crashing, accidentally formatting your disk and staying up all night.

The meeting ended with a door prize drawing and checkouts from the library.

Elections Coming Soon!
By Norma Williams

Since elections are right around the corner, I thought I would tell you a little about the Secretary-Treasurer position that will be available for nominations at the September meeting.

This position is really quite simple. A few hours a month is all that is needed to balance the checkbook, write monthly minutes, and updating the membership list.

Most of the programs used for record keeping can be acquired from the library. I use Analog's Micro-Check program for the treasury report and balancing the checkbook and Compute's Speed-Script word processing program would be excellent for all of your correspondence and minutes.

The nominations will be taken at the September meeting and elections will be held at our October meeting. SO GO FOR IT!

LIBRARY BITS
by Patricia E. Danridge

At our July meeting, quite a few people made donations to the BRACE library. We gained an ST Log magazine, two BASIC programming books, four games (one on cartridge), one H.D.U.G. magazine (Hard Disk Users Group), two FOREM Computer BBS disks (MPP BASIC and 850 BASIC versions), a utilities disk and Bank Street Writer (and docs).

Thanks to Geoff Bartenhagen, Chris Dotson, Brian Landers, Will Sturgis, Joe Tackett, and Norma Williams for their generous additions to our collection.

Also we would like to thank Chris Dotson for copying to disk cassettes of ANALOG mags #35 and 36. We could still use some assistance with this task as there are still many other cassettes to be copied to disk. See me or any of the other officers if you would like to help.

And finally, thanks to Norma Williams for bringing three more music processor programs to the BRACE library. Lik'en My Atari-Antic Demo, and Advanced Music Processor Songs #1 and #2, along with the recent contributions will be available for your viewing and listening pleasure at the August meeting.

GEE, THESE BRACE MEMBERS
ARE KEEPING ME BUSY, NOW!



B.R.A.C.E. MEMBERS POINTS LIST
Current Standings

1.	BRIAN LANDERS	30
2.	JOE TACKETT	21
3.	CHRIS DOTSON	15
4.	PHIL TAYLOR	15
5.	HAL NASON	14
6.	NORMA WILLIAMS	12
7.	BOBBY ELLIOT	10
8.	G. BARTENHAGEN	5
9.	STAN BUNDY	2

PRESIDENTIAL SUITE
Phillip G. Taylor

Hello again, Well, by the time you read this, the BRACE contingent to Columbus will already be on the road. We hope to buy some good stuff for the library and some good stuff to give away as door prizes.

In other Brace business, I want to thank Bobby Elliot and Geoff Bartenhagen for their contribution of their time and expertise. I am lead to believe that the demonstration of BBSing was a success and had RAVE reviews.

I should be able to stay for the ENTIRE meeting this month. I apologize for not being able to stay for the entire meeting last month.

Well, it is getting close to time for elections. Officer elections will be held at the OCTOBER meeting with nominations due by the SEPTEMBER meeting. I want everyone to consider running for something. Also if you don't want to be an officer, you can still participate in some way.

I am happy to announce that the points system is a rousing success. I want to thank Hal Nason, our one and only VP for his suggestion for instituting this idea. I also want to thank the POKEY PRESS for inspiring Hal with this idea. We have gotten several more additions to the library and the competition is hot in the point standings. Brian Landers is still in the lead with 30 points (good job Brian, keep it up).

Well that's about all for this month. I hope to see all you at the meeting.

PHIL.

Mapping the Atari
By Brian Landers

Mapping the Atari is an excellent book by Ian Chadwick that no serious programmer should be without. It is a complete list of all the memory locations in the Atari computer, as well as what their functions are and how to use them. It also has sections on The Vertical Blank, Color, Sound and Music, Player/missile Graphics, Display Lists, as well as special section for the XL/XE computers such as XL/XE Enhancements and Bugs, The Parallel Bus and Enhanced Cartridge Interface, Using the 130xe extra memory, the 1050 drive and DOS 2.5, and how to change the operating system using a translator disk. At the end of the book, there are several programs for the XL and XE computers. The book has an extensive index which lists the locations by Label as well as by Subject. This book is an excellent resource for any Atari programmer and is a good investment if you're trying to learn how to program.

MAPPING THE ATARI by Ian Chadwick - \$16.95

The Indus GT Disk Drive
By Brian Landers

There's not really that much choice of disk drives for the 8-bit Atari computers. There's the 1050, which has been discontinued, the Astra drives, Percom drives, and my personal favorite, the Indus GT.

The Indus is a true double density drive when used with a DOS that supports double density such as DOS XL, which is supplied with it, or SpartaDos. Its not the fastest double density drive in the world, but its still one of the best. Its a lot smaller than the 1050, and its made of a high-impact black plastic. A smoked plastic dust lid covers the front of the drive, and can be raised at the touch of button. An LED display shows what track you're reading or writing on, as well as displaying any error messages that might occur. When an error does occur, the drive sends an obnoxious beep to the monitor speaker, and displays a 2-digit code number which you must look up in the rather skimpy manual.

There are 4 push-button switches on the front panel of the drive. These switches are labeled Protect, Drive Type, Track, and Error. Pushing the Protect button puts an electronic "write protect" on the drive, making it impossible to write anything to the drive. The Drive Type switch displays the number of the drive, as well as what density the drive is, single, double, or 1050 enhanced density. The Track button redisplayes the track information after an error occurs. Finally, the Error button redisplayes the last error that occurred.

One of the nicest features of the Indus GT drive is the software which is included with the drive. You get a good beginner's word processor, a pretty good database manager, and a simple spreadsheet program. These are good programs, which can really help you get started using your new drive. The Indus GT also comes with DOS XL by O.S.S. When I received my drive, it came with a very slim DOS manual. I haven't seen the newer drives, so I don't know what they come with.

On the subject of customer support, my drive recently stopped working. I think something was screwed up in the I/O ports. I sent it back to the people I ordered it from, and in a couple of weeks, I received a large package containing a brand new Indus GT with the latest versions of the software. It also included something called Synchronesh which is supposed to speed up your drive, but I haven't really tried it.

The Indus GT is one of the best drives for the Atari 8-bit computers, and the free software is great. If you need a good disk drive and don't want to spend an arm and a leg, look into the Indus GT.

INDUS GT DISK DRIVE - \$200

BBS'S FROM A NEWCOMER'S VIEWPOINT
by Patricia E. Danridge

A few months ago I got a 1030 modem from the disassembly of ex-Prez Claudy's system. With quite a bit of encouragement from the current Prez and VP, I tried to get onto After Hours for the first time. What fun! Accidentally hitting wrong buttons resulting in my password not being saved, etc. Later on, I got into the newer boards, Homelink! and Rome 41 A.D., and just recently Twilight Zone.

I have found that it can be quite frustrating to look around if you cannot absorb all of the Help files for some of the BBS's. For example, when I was inspired (actually outraged enough) to reply at length to another user's comments on a board on After Hours, I found that after a bit I could not continue, and had no clue as to what was wrong. Since that episode, I figured out that I should have saved that message and continued on a subsequent one. As it was, I deleted my message once and redid it, came to the same impasse, saved it uncompleted, and came on the next day with the remainder posted to All. It was extremely embarrassing to me that such a thing could have happened without the Sysop anywhere in the neighborhood to come to the rescue.

With After Hours, which is a Carina board, when you come on, a very long help file is thrown up on the screen. It gives you the commands to do such things as read messages and the like, but I noticed that it does not tell you very much about what happens with some functions, such as editing. Nor did I always understand certain aspects of the help files; the language in which they were written seemed more times than not the language of very experienced users, and hence not too friendly to someone like me.

In contrast, with Homelink! (an Express board) when I have had problems with editing, the Sysop was around and came to the rescue to give me some hints. If the Sysop isn't around, there are both short help files which give the commands and longer ones which explain more about those commands in very normal user friendly English. One thing which is good in this BBS when you want to reply to someone is that it lets you know when you are running out of message space. That makes it easy to continue your message on another or to go back and cut out parts to get it down to one message. So far I find it pretty easy to get along in this BBS.

Rome 41 A.D., one of the newest Carina boards to date, is a pretty neat one. It has proven easy for me to get around in, although with the Roman theme, you have to pay more attention to the language in order to do things. For example, message boards are called slaves, with names like Orgy and others. When you log on and give your password, it is printed out as "Caesar", while the last four digits of your phone number

come out as "Hall". It is obvious to me that the Sysop has put a lot of work into this one, and I hope that if I have a long message to post that it will not prove to be too difficult.

I've looked at Twilight Zone a few times now, and really like the graphics and the requirement of signing on with one's true name. Although my status level is not exceedingly high, just enough to read and send messages and do a little more, I hope to learn more about text adventures and the like, as I have heard are possible to set up with Express boards like this and Homelink!

Overall, I guess the important thing for anyone who gets onto the BBS's to do is to capture all of the Help files to buffer and then save them to disk for later perusal. I like to send them to the printer as well so that I will have them on hand in order to cut out wandering through them and hence wasting time when first logging on.

When it comes to information like your handle and password--you will want to use a different password for security for each board if you're not assigned one, as on Homelink!--it is a good idea to save them on the macros on your BBS phone list. Once that is done, you won't have to sign on as a new user just because you forgot the password.

At my age, I still have much to learn about these devices. Just because I sign myself as Teacher does not mean that I can't learn from you young whizzes out there! For the new modem owners, I say, welcome to the world of new languages and methods! And you thought that English was the only language you needed to know!!!



The following article is the fix for the XM301 modem when used in conjunction with an Atari 1050 disk drive. This fix should only be used if you are experiencing loading problems when the modem is plugged into the system. First test out your system without the XM301 modem, if it operates OK proceed to plug in the modem and try to boot-up a disk. If the disk drive operates sporadically with the modem plugged in, then you need to do the following to your modem:

P.S. This is an excellent time to take care of the other problem most XM301's have, i.e. the four unattached wires that can make contact with other wires and burn up your system. See earlier edition of BRACEBITS for details.

XM301 Fix

NOTE: This fix is NOT an official Atari upgrade. If you attempt this modification, you do so at your own risk! If you have no electronic experience DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS FIX.

To correct the booting problems experienced with some XM301/1050 configurations will require you to have three 470 ohm resistors, some solder, solder iron, wire cutters, and a phillips screwdriver.

1. Open the XM301 modem and remove the PCB assembly.
2. Locate the area where the cable is attached to the board. The wires will be labelled with numbers. Some modems will have these contacts coated with a sealant. Remove the sealant carefully with your fingers, small knife or screwdriver.
3. De-solder the lines labelled 3, 9, & 13 and pull the wires through the board. Remember which wire goes into which hole. Better yet label them with a small piece of tape.
4. Install each of the 470 ohm resistors into each open hole. Push the resistors all the way in leaving them standing upward.
5. Trim the excess wire extending through the bottom of the board and solder the resistor in place.
6. Attach the designated wires close to the tops of the resistors, solder them in place and trim the excess wire off the resistor.
7. Be sure that none of the resistors or wires are touch each other.

8. Put the modem back together. Works fine!!

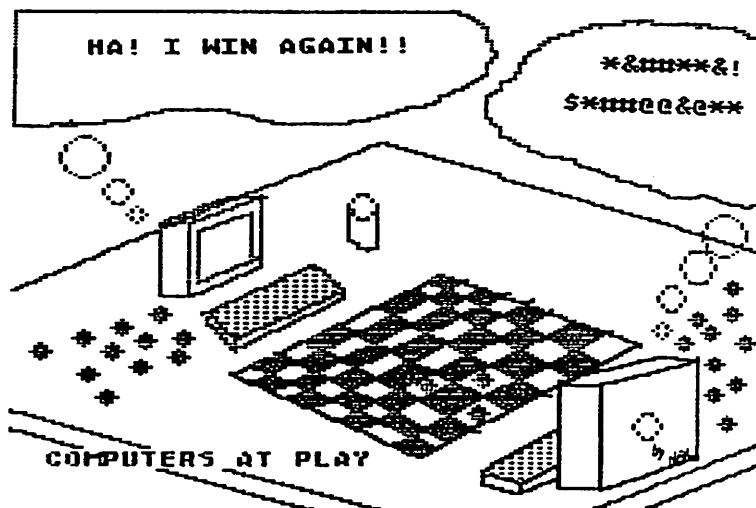
The Supra 300AT Modem

By Brian Landers

The Supra 300AT modem is a 300 baud modem which connects directly to the computer via joystick port number 2. There are 3 LED lights on the front of the modem. These lights are labeled CD, OR, and PWR. The PWR(Power) light tells when the power to the modem is turned on. The OR(Off hook) light tells when the phone is off the hook(ready to dial), and the CD(Carrier Detect) light tells when a carrier from another computer is detected. The only other thing on the front panel is the power switch. I prefer to have power switches on the front of equipment so I don't have to reach behind it and possibly pull a wire loose or something like that. On the rear of the modem are the connections for the phone line and for an external telephone. Also on the rear panel is the connection for the power supply. I wish companies would either wire the power cable into the case or use a different type of connection. The power supply which is used on this modem is the type that you would find for a model train set. Its a long cable ending in a square box with the plug in it. The only problem with this type of power supply is that its heavy. My power strip is mounted under my desk and the thing keeps falling out and cutting me off. I have to use masking tape to hold the thing on the outlet strip.

The 300AT comes with the Smart Terminal software on disk. This is a good beginning terminal program for communication, but I would recommend getting either AMODEM, or the excellent MPP EXPRESS. Smart Terminal is okay, but uploading and downloading is a royal pain. With MPP EXPRESS, the MPP is a great modem if you can put up with its slow speed. If you need more speed, buy a 1200 or 2400 baud modem for a lot more money.

SUPRA 300AT MODEM - \$35



CHRIS DOTSON 9/87
2900 SPURR ROAD
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY 40511

P.O. BOX 13063
LEXINGTON, KY 40583-3060

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COME TO THE NEXT MEETING OF B.R.A.C.E.
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 1987 AT 7:00 P.M.
UK MEDICAL CENTER ROOM MN 263